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ABSTRACT

One area wherein administrative commitment to innovation can be developed is in the field of career education. Career education is a useful concept that can unite the private, public, and work lives of individuals in a meaningful manner. In order to develop the concept of career education and its meaning, new ideas and procedures as well as changes in the thinking of policy makers and administrators is necessary. Some of the ideas that have to be understood are: infusion, policy, change, authority, and history. The role of the administrator, commitment, involvement, plan development, implementation, evaluation, and redesign are all components necessary to effect change in the educational unit and to make career education successful. Strategies for securing administrative commitment to innovation include: organization constituency approach, organization methodology, and authority-reality problem approach. Securing administrative commitment also involves other considerations which could be improved through an in-service program for line administrators. (Author/EC)

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SEEKING AN ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION

by

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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THE CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Vocational Education's mission is to increase the ability of diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations to solve educational problems relating to individual career planning and preparation. The Center fulfills its mission by:

- Generating knowledge through research
- Developing educational programs and products
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes
- Installing educational programs and products
- Operating information systems and services
- Conducting leadership development and training programs

PREFACE

The Second Career Education National Forum, held in Washington, D.C. in February, 1976, was evidence of The Center's continuing commitment to research and development in career education. Prominent researchers and academicians were joined by leading practitioners in a second nation-wide effort to share ideas, research, and operational programs in career education. We are hopeful that this exchange will lend insight to and impact upon future developments at federal, state and local levels. Corinne Rieder, Associate Director of the NIE Education and Work Task Force, and I look forward to planning and organizing the Third Forum—with hope that the interest and dedication of career educators will again form the foundation for stimulating discussion and thoughtful critique.

The Center is indebted to the National Institute of Education, sponsor of the Forum, for its support and advice in Forum planning. We also appreciate the time and efforts of those presenters who shared their insights with us all.

This monograph series includes Forum keynote presentations and additional papers from distinguished lectures presented at the Forum.

The Ohio State University and The Center are proud to share these papers with you.

Robert E. Taylor, Director
The Center for Vocational
Education

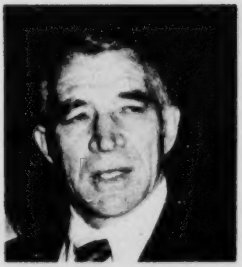
INTRODUCTION

Grant Venn, Callaway Professor of Education at the Georgia State University, has been a leader in the career education movement. He has long advocated a meaningful relationship between education and work from his positions as an administrator in the U.S. Office of Education, The Manpower Institute, the National Academy of School Executives of the American Association of School Administrators, and the Peace Corps. He has served as president of Western State College in Colorado and as superintendent of schools in Wood County (West Virginia), Corning (New York), and Othello (Washington). He received his doctorate and three other degrees at Washington State University where he later served on the faculty.

Dr. Venn was a keynote speaker at the First Career Education National Forum, presenting a paper entitled "Work Experience and Placement Programs" (included in a Center publication *Models of Career Education Programs*). The First Forum was held in Columbus, Ohio, during the Center's week-long Tenth Anniversary celebration in March 1975. During that week Dr. Venn was honored with the Center's Distinguished Service Award.

Grant Venn's belief in the integral relationship between education and work is best illustrated by his involvement in writing the book *The Boundless Resource*. As one of 24 council members, Grant Venn worked closely with Willard Wirtz, the National Manpower Institute, and other council members in developing a prospectus aimed at bridging education and work. This book was published in 1975.

The Center for Vocational Education and the National Institute of Education are proud to share with you Dr. Venn's presentation, "Seeking An Administrative Commitment to Innovation."



Seeking An Administrative Commitment to Innovation

Grant Venn

Jerome Bruner has said that "our young have become knowledge rich and experience poor."[1] Perhaps this observation might apply equally to those of us who see ourselves as experts or innovators. In most cases we have a great deal of knowledge about innovation, but very little experience in applying "new, creative ideas" to the organization or the environment which is supposed to improve. In fact, the title of this speech leads me to reflect that most people don't buy clothing they generally purchase a specific garment.

I am of the opinion that most people (especially those held accountable for an organization—the administrator) will not commit themselves to innovation in general, but will consider a specific innovation that can be defined and that may help achieve the overall organizational goals. It is on this premise that I will talk to you about seeking an administrative commitment to career education as a specific, definable and infusable innovation.

Career Education—An Approach to Educational Change

The great success of this nation's educational system is undoubtedly the world's best model, even with its faults,

weaknesses and inequalities. No other nation comes close to providing educational opportunities for the young as does the United States.

Equally successful, when compared to other economic systems, is our system of private enterprise built upon newer concepts of work than are found in most parts of the world.

These two models have developed entirely independently of each other with the consequence that "education" and "work" are separate and distinct facets of most people's lives.

Suddenly, and almost unknown to most of us, that fact has precipitated dire results in the lives of many. There is a growing mass of evidence and a growing number of examples of tragic losses in both human and economic terms to individuals and to society. These results appear to have their cause in the classical concept of education and work as separate institutional sovereignties—"two worlds" in the vernacular; yet, the evidence is at hand daily, and in every individual's experience, that education and work cannot be separated in a new technological society.[2]

In fact, education has become the link between the individual and the future for everyone. This has never been true in any other society. Work has recently become so diversified that most people must achieve the requisite education to do specific jobs. This is a sharp contrast to the old folk saying, "Son, I hope you get an education so you won't have to work like I did."

Rather than attempt a definition of career education as a relationship between education and work, let me simply say that it is a concept that can help education become more useful in aiding all of us, especially our young, develop and mesh private, public and work lives in a meaningful way for individual rewards and for societal benefits. If we consider ways to make education more meaningful for our young, we must consider not just how to improve what we now do, but rather, what different things must be done.

Such an approach will require not only new ideas and procedures, but will require a change in the thinking of policy makers and of the administrators of that policy—first!

Therefore, the following "understandings" are necessary to secure an administrative commitment to career education. These ideas are certainly not complete nor validated through research, but they are developed from experience as a public school administrator, as a college president, and as an interested and committed participant in career education.

1. **Infusion**

   Career education must be integrated into the ongoing educational program of the school or the educational unit; it cannot be seen as a preconceived model which must be "laid on" or added on.

2. **Policy**

   Career education requires a developed policy statement for the education unit since it demands a change in the roles and purposes of the school. It is not merely an added course or program separate from the ongoing curriculum. The policy should include a definition of career education.

3. **Change**

   Career education intends to change what is happening; *it must, therefore, obtain a commitment from those who set policy and administer that policy* and eventually from those who are to teach the young. If it becomes simply an "add on," it will dry up and drop off when the special funding stops.

4. **Authority**

Career education requires commitment and involvement by the organizational authority in order for it to become adopted. Simple creativity and logic may lead to an organization of forces against any change unless authority is involved in the development of the change approach. *The climate of the institution, as set by authority, may be a much stronger key to success than the validity of the concept.*

5. **History**

The history of innovation in education shows a "short life" and ineffective change. We can all remember the panacea of educational T.V., life adjustment, contract teaching, C.A.I., new math, etc. It would appear that they, like the Kaiser automobile, couldn't beat the system. *In most cases the "change agents" were "added on" rather than developed. The innovations seldom changed the organization structure, purposes or methodology.*

As noted here, these principles are not conclusive but are understandings that one must include in securing administrative commitment.

The Success of Career Education

On the assumption that the principles listed above are valid, we need to examine the components necessary to effect change in the educational unit. What is needed to make career education successful?

1. **The Role of the Administrator**

It is doubtful that an educational unit can become outstanding without leadership by the administrator. Poor administration will lead to poor education. If leadership is unsound in terms of knowledge, understanding and competencies then good staff will leave, support will disappear and quality will fall. *In effect, if career education is to succeed, the line administration—superintendent, principal, president, or the person that gives rewards and has authority must be involved.*

2. **Commitment**

The first step in successful innovation is administrator commitment. Without this it is unlikely that any significant change will follow. *There are many reasons why the administrator may become committed, but the degree of commitment will, above all else, determine the success of career education.* Later we will look at some alternative ways to secure such commitment. Commitment may be the reason that one school achieves growth in student outcomes and another, using the same approach, does not.

3. **Involvement**

It is doubtful that much will happen unless there is *involvement in career education by all those who must implement it.* In this case it takes staff, community, and students as well as administration.

4. **Plan Development**

For career education to be successful there must be an overall plan which determines activities, priorities and time frames. *If career education is to be a purpose of the educational unit and, thus, cause change to occur, each part must be installed as part of an overall plan for the system.* This is not the application of a model but the development of a unique plan which fits the individual educational agency. The plan should change as experience is gained.

5. **Implementation**

The development of specific activities will, of necessity, involve many persons, specifically those who are to carry out career education. The overall plan should guide each activity and prevent it from being repetitive and isolated. *Implementation will be a process of achieving a goal and completing a task rather than adding new tasks and conceiving new ideas.* The concept of innovation is often rejected because it is not part of a planned goal.

6. **Evaluation**

Experience, evaluation and follow-up should guide revision of the plan and reshaping of the activities. However, a most significant activity should be an outside review at a date set in the original plan. This external review, together with the ongoing evaluation, should be the basis for a complete review and a new design.

7. **Redesign**

One of the greatest handicaps educators face is their belief that answers are right or wrong and that they can't

start until they know they are right. There can be no "right plan" for career education! Thus, we must redesign our programs based on a changing society. *If career education is touted as the answer, educators will stop looking and changing.*

You Are an Innovator

The first question an innovator faces is "what do I do if my administrator is not committed and seems unconcerned about career education?" The task is to secure commitment! How is this most effectively done?

What is your commitment?

I believe the first question the innovator must ask himself is, "What is my commitment—not specifically to career education, but to the purpose of the school and the needs of the student?" The administrator wants to know if you are going to help achieve the goals of the school and improve education, or if you will simply start a new program called "Career Education." Too often the specialists have fractionated the purposes of the educational unit, divided the efforts of the staff and overlooked the needs of the students. How can you and career education help the school *and* become part of its total improvement?

Do you understand the role of the administrator?

It is important that the innovator, you, realize that the line administrator is accountable for all of the outcomes of the school; he/she must respond to many issues, problems, and pressures internal and external to the organization. He/She deals with the "way it is" and not how it should be. The "model" may be far from reality. If the innovators are ignorant

of the responsibilities of the administrator, they may organize more opposition to the idea of career education than support for it. Every administrator looks for better ways to do his/her job. Are you helping their effort?

Alternative Approaches

In designing a strategy for getting administrative commitment, one must remember that the strategy should relate as much to the uniqueness of the administrator and his/her job as it does to the nature of career education. There are many ways to try, but, basically, they fall into the following three approaches.

Organization Constituency Approach

If we follow the premise that career education should be infused into the educational unit and change it to better meet the needs of youth, it becomes obvious that the superintendent must rely on the unit heads (principals, etc.) and the teachers.

The innovator, then, must be sure that the principals and teachers understand career education as a potential aid to them and to the fulfillment of their goals. The innovator must emphasize those aspects of career education that motivate learning, give purpose to schooling and make the school a success-securing institution.

Organization Methodology

In using this method the innovator relates directly to the broad educational goals of the agency so that the policy maker and administrator see career education as a better way to achieve the already set purposes of education. During the regular staff meetings or discussions with the administrator, the innovator should respond to the need for quality improvement of the present program.

This approach requires more than selling an idea, it *requires planning for alternative approaches within the realm of the possible than can be achieved without creating jurisdictional disputes and causing complete change. At this stage a little success is better than a great scheme.*

Authority-Reality-Problem Approach

At any given time education is faced with a series of critical issues and problems which are based on economic, social, political and cultural changes. Governors, business leaders, and other power figures constantly call upon education to solve the problems of the young and of society. The administrator must be responsive to these problems. Whether the problems are real or imaginary, the reality is that the public school administrator must be responsive to these factors.

Can you, as innovator, relate career education to these issues and authority threats? Can you help your administrator do his job better, and can you develop an approach to career education that will respond to such processes and issues?

Securing Administrative Commitment

It is assumed that either through your efforts, or through interest developed from other sources, the superintendent, as chief administrator, chooses to examine career education as a possible innovation in the school system.

Certain considerations are basic to an attempt to secure administrative commitment. They are as follows:

1. *Career education is a new concept and many definitions are being espoused.* If one hopes for commitment, a specific definition must be accepted.

2. *The administrator is the key person.* Often an excessive commitment to an idea may cause the administrator to react negatively. Since the administrator rewards staff and effects change, this person needs a strong data-base for the idea—not a fanatical commitment.

3. *There is no "right" way to implement career education.* Approaches and plans must be designed to fit the specific educational units. Outcomes may be common, but methodology and plan will vary with the situation.

4. *An overall plan should be developed prior to implementation.* The installation of each activity needs to be correlated to an overall design encompassing content, time frame and priority structure.

An In-service Program for Line Administrators

An in-service program for line administrators in an educational agency should be designed with consideration to the following characteristics:

1. the development of a common understanding of career education—what it is, why it is needed, and what the payoffs are for school, students and community;

2. the role of the administrator in developing career education;

3. the role and responsibility of the community in implementing career education;

4. implementation at the elementary, middle or junior high, and high school levels;

5. transition from school to work; and finally

6. the development of an administrative plan for career education which includes a board of education policy on career education, a statement on the role of the administrator in the development of career education, a district-wide plan for career education and an individual building or job plan for each staff position.

It is important to differentiate between an administrative plan and a program plan. An administrative plan is a design for action that sets goals and priorities, establishes a time frame and a sequential approach, establishes roles and responsibilities for different actors and units within the system, sets policies and new directions for the education agency, and defines a starting point and a completion point. It never answers the question "How?"

The concept of administrative planning is to help make decisions based on beliefs, the best knowledge available, and an understanding that the plan may improve the quality of education for each student.

Program planning, on the other hand, is detailing the methods used to adapt and implement the plan with those people responsible for operationalizing the concept.

Essentially there are *three* components in a successfully completed administrative plan:

1. The only way to get something done is to begin. How, where, and when do we start?

2. Decisions must be made for what to try. Usually an administrative plan involves a group decision-making process.

3. The only stability is change. As the system moves into the program planning phase, experience, resources, evaluation, attitudes and prejudices will force and shape the plan.

The details of "how" must be worked out before implementing each action, but the overriding first step is securing commitment and developing a plan which will allow the staff to develop its strategies in relationship to a total design. There must be a primary decision to adapt the concept of career education before effective approaches can be designed.

This approach is not new and has been tried with local school systems in Georgia through a series of five-day Career Education Staff Development Institutes for School Administrators. At the present time the Institutes have served over 75 school districts, 1,000 administrators and nearly 75% of the pupils in Georgia. Administrators have requested the service, and, at present, there are requests that are left unfilled.

In arranging to participate in the Staff Development Conferences, each system agreed to the following conditions: (a) the superintendent and principals would be present all five days except in emergencies; (b) other staff might attend if space permitted; and (c) the superintendent would provide the leadership for developing a plan for his/her school district during the last two days. Each administrator and participant was provided with a notebook that contained short articles and materials relating to the topical areas of career education, a detailed agenda, an extensive annotated bibliography for use in the local unit, a Career Planning Guide to use in developing the administrative plan, a self-evaluation form on career education understandings, and an Institute evaluation form.

The Institute staff was composed primarily of administrators, community leaders, and specialists who were living and working in Georgia. Almost all the staff were familiar to the participants, and

they were recognized as having implemented career education in their school units.

The Institute agenda was planned with the local superintendent and approved prior to beginning the Institute in the school district. Following is a typical Institute agenda.

Day One

The first day of the Institute is devoted to developing a common understanding of career education. Planned presentations are followed by discussion and reaction to the Institute agenda by a panel of local people.

Problems, issues, concerns and attitudes are relayed to the presenters on the upcoming days. They then respond to these items in relation to their specific topic assignment.

Day Two

Three of the six broad topic areas are covered during the day by individual presenters. Discussion and questions follow each presentation.

Day Three

The topical discussions are brought to closure on the third day. At the end of the third day, each participant is given a set of guidelines to aid in developing their district and building plans.

Day Four

The morning is typically spent reviewing the process and purpose of the plan as an administrative tool that forces decision-making and priorities-setting, and helps in the establishment of a time frame and an outline of an overall approach for the next several years.

The rest of the morning each superintendent helps his group develop a board policy and a written statement regarding the role of the administrator.

The afternoon opens with a review of policy with the group, and proceeds to the development of a district plan for career education.

Day Five

The superintendent responds to discussion and questions regarding his/her district plan. Following the presentation, the participants break into groups—elementary, middle school and high school—to exchange ideas on their recommendations for an adequate plan. Following this group effort, each person writes his building or job plan.

At the end of this last day, each participant submits his/her written statement of board policy, individual leadership role, district-wide plan and job or building plan to the superintendent.

An evaluation of the program is the terminating activity.

Representatives from the state department of education and the nearby college or university are in attendance as resource persons at all sessions.

The development of administrative commitment through this process is based on the belief that the administrator, by omission or commission, provides leadership to career education or opposition to it. The forced decision-making involved in the planning process creates an open commitment.

Opportunities for follow-up are provided through the notebook materials and use of the Institute personnel—both presenters and resources.

The plan provides a basis for the innovator or career education specialist to move into the implementation process with the approval, confidence, and hopefully, the clear signal that everyone has a role in and a reward for implementing career education.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Bruner, Jerome. "Continuity of Learning," *Saturday Review of Literature*, March 1973.

[2] Wirtz, Willard. *The Boundless Resource*, A Prospectus for an Education/Work Policy, The New Republic Press, Washington, D. C., 1975.